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THE

UNBELIEF OF CHRISTENDOM.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION OF

MR. FRANK P. APPLETON,

AS PASTOR OF THE

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH

IN DANVERS,

JANUARY 14th, 1846,

BY

NATHANIEL HALL,
MINISTER OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN DORCHESTER.

Published by Vote of the Society.

DANVERS:
G. R. CARLTON—COURIER PRESS.
1846.

SELECTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

BY REV. JOSEPH H. ALLEN, OF JAMAICA PLAIN.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his path. Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

"Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor taken upon him the vow deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing of the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."

"Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee I knew thee; and I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet unto the nation. Then said I, Oh, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child. But the Lord said, Say not, I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to sustain thee, saith the Lord. My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. Then said I, Lo I come, to do thy will, O Lord."

"Wherefore I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effective working of his power, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith

of him. And though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me, yea, wo is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker thereof with you. I believed, and therefore have I spoken, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall have cause for shame; but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in me, whether it be by life or by death. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith."

"We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake. They watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief. Receive him, therefore, in the Lord, with all gladness. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things. As it is written, I will give you pastors according to mine own heart, that shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. Our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. Ye are our epistle, known and read of all men; written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God,—not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. The God of peace be with you."

"This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth. He that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification and exhortation and comfort. I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

"Foolish and trifling questions avoid, knowing that they do engender strifes; and the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. If any man teach otherwise,

and consent not to wholesome words, he is proud; knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth. But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Wo be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace."

"Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you. Let no man despise thy youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. Honor all men; love the brotherhood; rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Neglect not the gift that is in thee. Grow in grace. Be not wise in your own conceit; not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed; not self willed, not soon angry; not given to wine; not a striker; not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality; a lover of good men; sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as thou hast been taught; in all things showing thyself a pattern of good works. Whosoever shall do and teach these commandments, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to thy faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.

SERMON.

LUKE, 18 : 8.—"When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

These words are recorded as having fallen from the lips of Jesus, at the close of one of his parables—a parable whose object, as stated by the Evangelist, was the inculcation of the duty of an unfainting perseverance in devout and holy effort; presenting as the encouragement thereto, the assurance that, sooner or later, it should receive at the hands of God the sought-for blessing. The connexion of the words with what precedes them, is not clearly obvious, neither their particular application in the mind of him who uttered them. I would presume, however, to regard them as simply an outbreaking, undesignedly syllabled to the ear, of his sorrow at that want of faith which he saw around him, even with his followers, and which he foresaw would continue with them in future time,—faith in truth, in goodness, in God; in God, especially, as the gracious listener to prayer, the sure avenger of his faithful and trusting children. The words would seem to have been uttered despondingly—as if in a momentary doubtfulness that the time would ever come when earth should be the witness and theatre of a true, filial faith in its righteous and paternal guardian. How hard it must have been for Jesus to have borne with the unbelief which he saw, in so many forms, around him! How hard—when he so longed to remove it; when he could so appreciate its unworthiness; when he was so conscious of the blessedness of that which he would substitute for it,—the faith, beaming in his own soul as an unset-

ting sun, pervading and vivifying his whole being; making all duty joyous, and all temptation powerless, and all trial, in experience and in prospect, light; leading him to repose as trustingly in God's word and faithfulness, as a little child in its mother's heart of love.

It is very probable, however, that the words had a less extended application than I have thus supposed,—that by 'his coming,' he refers to the outward establishment of his religion in the then passing age, or merely to his first, personal coming as the expected Christ, and that 'the earth' was his own Judea. It is not material to my purpose to determine this. Enough, if the expression be regarded as the lament of his holy soul over the unbelief of those to whom he had come and spoken, as the accredited messenger of the God of Truth and Love.

"Faith on the earth." How little was there in the Saviour's day—how little is there now! how little of a genuine, lofty, heart-swaying, life-commanding, moral faith—how little even with those to whom 'the Son of man' has indeed come, more fully, more gloriously far, than ever of old; in all the institutions and means of his religion; in the unshadowed presence of its eternal truths; in the bright fulfilment, or the sure progress thereto, of many of its predictions; in the effects which the world has witnessed as its work, and which have added new seals to its Divinity, and echoed back its annunciation as 'the power of God'—how little, at least, compared with what of such position and privilege might reasonably be demanded.

That there *is* such a faith, we would not doubt, in many a heart, of the wide-spread homes of Christendom,—a faith true and holy, like his by whose teachings and life it was inspired. But in what a vast proportion of instances — are we not constrained to believe it? the faith of Christendom is a feeble, nominal, ineffective faith; not without a certain indirect restraining influence, nor yet barren of positive good fruits, but not a faith directing and controling the daily and inner life, not a faith laying hold of its invisible objects as they were indeed realities, and making actually paramount to all others the considerations they present. The faith—if it can be called such—of how

many who gather within Christian temples and around Christian altars, consists mainly, if not merely, in an unquestioning reception of the records of revelation as sacred and authentic, in a mere mental and formal acquiescence in what they are supposed to teach, in the adoption, it may be the tenacious holding, of certain views and propositions on the bare word of others, with no answering conviction in their hearts!

Were he to come *now*—that Son of man personally among us, now, after so many centuries in which the world has listened to his heavenly word, and seek for faith on the earth, faith in that word—his own, blessed, child-like faith,—would he find it? He would find churches gathered in his name; the table of remembrance spread with the mute symbols of his self-sacrifice; structures dedicated to his religion, pointing their spires whither itself would lead, and resounding with grateful mention of him; but how many would he find proving the sincerity and fullness of their faith by *living out* the precepts which their lips repeat, by *taking up* the cross which they wreathe with the flowers of sentiment, by abandoning themselves to the convictions of duty, in the undoubting persuasion that lead where it might, though it were through Gethsemane to Calvary, it is, it must be, the path not of safety only, but of life and peace and blessedness; that the one thing worth living for, is moral rectitude, and God's favor as its sure, immortal crown; that whoso loseth his life for Christ's and his Gospel's sake—in the cause of Truth, and Righteousness, and Humanity—the same, and he alone, shall find it?

I would not do injustice to the faith of Christendom; and that I may seem the less to do so, let me repeat my conviction,—that there are those in every community who would abide the test supposed; those who are conscious of a world-overcoming faith, and prove, daily, their possession of it, in the whole spirit of their hearts and lives. The Church has never been without its saints and martyrs; and to those whom the world has known as such are to be added others, a larger host, the dwellers in

obscure and humble spheres—on earth uncannonized, but known of Heaven;—

> "The thousands who uncheered by praise,
> Have made one offering of their days;
> For Love's, for Truth's, for Duty's sake,
> Resigned the bitter cup to take;
> And silently, in fearless faith,
> Have bowed their noble souls to death."

Such, in every age, there have been on the earth; such, I believe, there are now—and never more, perhaps, than now. Still the fact remains, of the sadly prevalent and great unbelief of the Christian world and the Christian church. The exceptions are too disproportionably inconsiderable to affect it, as a general statement.

Let us look at this fact in some of its particulars.

And first: With regard to the mighty and overcoming power of moral Truth in its conflict with Error,—is not unbelief every where betrayed? Men are not willing to trust to Truth, and having proclaimed it in the sincerity of their convictions, calmly to wait, in the assurance that its triumph-hour will come. They are not willing to let it go forth in its unadorned, severe simplicity; but would tame and soften it to existing prejudices, and have it approach with compromise the evil it would subdue. They are not willing to let it speak for itself, to rest in its own appeal to the understanding and the conscience; but seek the better to enforce it by considerations foreign from, and unworthy of it.

Look at the controversies of the day concerning opinions in theology. To say nothing of that angry strife of words, that unmanly quibbling and evasion and subterfuge, that purposed distortion of another's meaning, that unwillingness to meet fairly opposing argument, and weigh conflicting testimony,—to say nothing of all this—which characterises so much of the controversy of the Church, and which marks in those who descend to it, not merely unbelief in Truth, but a regard for it subordinate to that for self and sect—even with those who *love* Truth, and desire its spread in a spirit of a true philanthrophy—in the tone which controversy not unfrequently assumes, in the measures it adopts, in the great importance attached to immediate results,

in the peace of mind which is suffered to be suspended on the issue, in the introduction of matters personal and irrelevant to aid in the desired effect, in the earthly passions which are permitted to become enlisted in the contest, in all this, is there not betrayed a want of faith in the native energy and final prevalence of Truth? And whence that agitation and uneasiness produced by the promulgation of new opinions, when minds of peculiar biasses or endowments, or looking upon truth from a somewhat different position from the common one, make public their convictions? Whence that power in the mere *assertion* of what is deemed heretical and false, to startle the mind from its confidence, and fill it with foreboding fears for Truth and Christianity? as if by any mere speculations of man, or his puny assaults, the immortal Truth of God, could be endangered, or its course be more than temporarily obstructed!

There is, indeed, a zealous contention with apprehended error, which is perfectly consistent with the highest confidence in Truth, in its sure and ultimate triumph; a contention in view of the evil that its temporary reception might produce, and in view, also, of the fact, that Truth's progress is to be accelerated and ensured through the sincere and holy efforts of its recipients and friends; that in a sense, and no unimportant one, its cause is committed to their hands. What is spoken of, as the indication of unbelief in Truth, is that overheated and passionate zeal, which makes use of unlawful means, in an unholy spirit, for the furtherance of its ends—as if Truth was not sufficient for itself, but could be better served by falsehood; and that restlessness and agitation at the immediate consequences of error, as if they were to be abiding.

There seems always to have been this distrust of Truth. 'O ye of little faith,' might the holy Jesus have well repeated, with pitying heart, to his followers of every age, as, fearful and dismayed, they have seen the barque of the popular belief, loosed from its ancient and peaceful moorings, and exposed to the agitating breath of discussion, and the counter currents of dissent, and have predicted therefrom the worst consequences to the cause of Truth and Humanity. How have men trusted to the

sword, which they have drawn for it; to the creeds in which they have bound and shrivelled it; to the institutions and men they have set for its defence; to every thing, rather than to Truth itself, as its own best defender, having God and angels on its side, and in all hearts a testimony! And still, when the whole history of the past is reading a rebuke to this distrust; when the attempts of men to stay the progress of Truth are seen to have been so ineffectual, not more so the playful attempts of childhood to stay by its mounds of sand old ocean's rising flood, still is that distrust experienced; still is there witnessed, every where, the want of a calm and quiet confidence in its power and progress.

I have spoken of unbelief in the power of Truth, and its final prevalence over Error. A like unbelief is manifested in its power over the world's wrongs, and inhumanities, and crimes, to lessen and end them; unbelief in truth, and in principles—in truth as spoken, and as exhibited in action. Look at those great movements of the age which so hopefully, by their aim and object, distinguish it from all preceding ones. With a professed sole reliance on moral means for the achievement of their desired results, on the force of argument and persuasion, on appeals to the reason and conscience and heart, how plainly is it apparent that, actually, such means are, to a greater or less degree, distrusted. The opprobrious speech; the coarse and bitter invective; the fierce denunciation, levelled not only against the evil and wrong which is sought to be subdued, but also against those, indiscriminately, who, from any cause, are connected with it; the scornful abuse heaped upon those who differ from the associated mass, though it be a difference about measures merely, not ends; the restless impatience at the mere show of opposition; the rash imputation of unworthy motives;—are such the expressions of a calm reliance in the power of truth and love? Why, but for a want of faith in them, are they not left to do their work, in the silence and secresy of their invisible sphere, instead of being accompanied, and so far as love is concerned, contradicted, by the breathings of earthly passion? Why, by those, the sincerity of whose devotion to the cause they advocate can-

not be questioned, is there a resort to the spirit, if not the weapons of a carnal warfare, but from an unbelief that those other and spiritual agencies are really what they claim to be,—"mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds"? The gospel rule of overcoming evil with good,—thank God! there is a faith on the earth with regard to it as never before; a faith increasing, as more and more the rule is tested, and as men draw nearer to Him from whose infinite perfections it is reflected, and whose eternal law it is; and yet, how little is there, after all, of that faith in it which leads to an unfaltering perseverance in its application, in spite of its apparent inefficiency and failure; which urges to an unremitted renewal of the means, though, seemingly, the looked for end is as far as ever from being realized. How is evil still opposed to evil—by those, I mean, who, without a spirit of retaliation, seek to *overcome* the evil. How, for this end, is violence placed, practically, before peaceableness; threatening before forbearance; harshness of treatment before gentleness; armed resistance before meek endurance; a partial hiding of the truth before a generous openness. There is more faith in the Christian world in the expediency of force and cunning, than of the maxims and spirit of Jesus. There is more reliance on external agencies, on insitutions and governments, and associations, for redemption from social evil and wrong, or at best, to a mere intellectual culture, than to the silent spread from heart to heart, and the deepening power of moral principles. The all conquering energy of love; the power of an unaffected kindness and good will to disarm hostility, to expel from those towards whom it is manifested the evil intention and desire; it is spoken of; it is eloquently declaimed upon; it is believed in, as what in some circumstances and with regard to some individuals may be true; how many believe in it as always and invariably true, with a faith leading them, always and invariably, to act upon it? A faith that faints not nor is weary at the long persistence of the evil doer, but repeats and repeats its blessing, and waits, in the patience of an assured heart, with its eye in Heaven, and its hope strengthened there. With how many, is their faith in this divine principle sufficient to carry them a few steps only

on its path, to lead them in but a few successive instances to its exercise. In the absence of a speedy and manifest success, they doubt and are discouraged. While others have still less faith in it even than this—supposing the effects ascribed to it, as a general thing, to be a fancy rather than a fact; a beautiful picture, which it is well enough to contemplate, but which is not, and cannot be, realized in life.

And this want of faith in principles connects itself with a want of faith in man, as the subject of their influence. Man, it is expressed all around us, is essentially and naturally selfish, degraded, unresponsive to the high appeals of truth and love. He must be moved, if at all, by considerations addressed to his lower nature, his appetites and passions, his fear of loss, his love of ease and gain and power and happiness. And others, again, who say not this, but something better of man, manifest but little faith in what they say, but little reliance in his moral sentiments, in his susceptiveness of high and abiding impressions, his ability to throw from him the evils which a false and sinful life and a corrupt social environment have bound about him, to tame and subjugate his passions and propensities, and give to the spiritual within him a predominance over the sensual, that faith in man which glows so brightly in the youthful soul, as it looks from its green and peaceful seclusion on the yet distant world—that early faith, so lovely in itself, so happy for the heart, born of the heart's instinctive tendencies to what is good and noble; how sad, that it should gradually fade away and be renounced, as the individual comes in closer contact with his kind! And if, in after-time, it should revive again, and, planting itself on the higher grounds of man's spiritual relations and capacities, and on the rock of the Almighty's promises, go forward, with holy ardor, to the battle of reform, girded but with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,"—how sad, that it must be met with sneering distrust; that it must do its work amidst a cold and heartless scepticism as to its success, which would chill to death whatever was not of heaven-born life!

Again—to show another phase of the same unbelief there are everywhere expressed doubts of the practicableness of the

Gospel as a rule of life. We hear it not alone from the ignorant and degraded: it comes from the learned, the wise, the good; from the elevated places of society; aye, from the Christian pulpit it comes, in assertion or by implication, that in the present condition of things, Christ's law of morality, and his own blessed practice, cannot be strictly adhered to. It is beautiful in theory, they admit; it is right in principle; but it cannot be carried out. It will not do either for individuals or communities to adopt, in all the length and breadth of their application, those precepts which require us "to love our neighbor as ourselves," "to love our enemies," "to resist not evil, but return blessing for cursing," to be meek and forgiving and self-forgetting, in all our intercourse with men. 'Impossible!' says the statesman. 'Amiable and pleasing delusion! Rules to be acted upon by angels, perhaps, but not by men, not in this world.' And he goes on in the advocacy of measures based on principles of the most selfish and pagan morality, measures aimed at the destruction of those whom he is commanded to bless. 'Impossible!' says the man of business. 'To abide by those maxims would be my temporal ruin. Others would take advantage of me continually, and deride me for my simplicity.' And he goes on in his petty frauds, and sordid calculations, and ungenerous and unconfiding bearing. 'Impossible!' again, says the individual in private life. 'I *cannot* do what those precepts require of me; not strictly; not habitually. It is against human nature that one should desire and seek his neighbor's good equally with his own; that one should not resent insults and injuries, and defend himself by every way he can, in the possession of his rights.' And he goes on to act in accordance with human nature, indeed; but with it only in its lowest tendencies. *Impossible?* What a word to be employed in such a connection! What a word with which to greet that 'Son of Man' when he cometh to find faith on the earth!

And again, there is unbelief as to the *necessity* of this strictness of obedience to the law of Christ; its necessity before God, in that it *is* the law of Christ, and has through him the force of a divine authority; and its necessity, also, because that in such obedi-

ence, in being imbued with the sacred principles of which that law is the expression, the soul finds alone its salvation. Men say, many do at the present time, 'here is a rule, indeed; and so far as it accords with our ideas of what is reasonable and fitting, so far as it seems to us practicable and best, we will follow it. More than this we need not do.' They do not believe in it as the Word of the Lord from the mouth of his Anointed, bound up with the direction, unqualified and universal, 'Go thou and obey.' They do not see its practicableness in the fact that it is commanded; that it is *where* it is,—a part of that system of truths and principles, of disclosures and sanctions, bearing on its front the seal of Heaven's eternal Sovereign. And again, men say, or such is their thought, 'So much of goodness will do for me as will carry me along safely, reputably, with a tolerably easy conscience, through this world, and save me from the threatened doom of the positively wicked in the world to come.' They do not believe in the necessity, a necessity growing out of the fact of their capacities and wants as human souls, the necessity for those own souls' sake, of being baptised into the spirit of the Gospel, of having implanted within them that principle of a divine life, from which all the Christian virtues and graces spring, as clusters from the vine.

Another form of the prevalent unbelief, closely allied to others named, is that which denies or doubts the possibility of freeing the world from the dark and terrible evils which have always brooded upon it; denies or doubts that the time will ever come, when Justice and Love shall be enthroned among the nations, and Freedom and Peace and all social blessings, as the fruits of their reign, be universally and forever ensured. Of some of these evils, and among them those most gigantic ones, Slavery and war, we hear it said, 'they are necessary evils. In one form or another they will always exist among men. You may do something to modify and restrain them, to change for the better their modes and circumstances; but to think of their extinction, is to dream. They are evils, we allow—crimes, if you please, against God and man; but they are necessary evils, and the world must suffer them.' *Necessary evils!* That a man

should say it with the Gospel in his hands, who believes in Christ, who believes in God, who believes in a Providence; who knows anything, by experience, or observation, of the subduing, transforming power of Christianity; who has seen how before its glance of love, chains stronger than iron melt away, and crueler hands than grasp the sword are outstretched in blessing! Necessary evils! What! does God contemplate them as a part of the established order of things? does Christianity veil her cross before them, and turn away in despair? Whence came they? but of men's passions and lusts. And if Christianity have power to subdue these in a *single* heart, why not in *all* hearts.

Such are some of the many forms of the unbelief of Christendom. The subject was chosen, not from any love for that severity of remark which its discussion involves, but simply, that by calling attention to a great and saddening fact, we might be more incited to seek for and apply the adequate remedy. There is a far worse infidelity than that whose seat is the intellect; an infidelity which may be theirs who assent to the propositions of the purest creed,—an infidelity of heart and life; the want of moral faith; a practical unbelief in human virtue, in man's capacities and destiny, in an overruling and paternal Providence, in the answer to prayer, and the success of all holy efforts. It chills the affections; it narrows the sympathies; it checks all generous enthusiasm; it hinders all admiring and reverential homage; it withholds from all noble endeavor. And it is the more to be guarded against and feared, than the infidelity which is so named, for the very reason that it bears not with the community the latter's odious character, and one is not led by the word of others to mark in himself its existence, or from dread of others' censure to avoid it.

And where is the remedy for this unbelief? I know not where, if not in a devout and habitual contemplation of the grounds of faith, and in imparting to whatever faith we have the expanding breath of action. The grounds of faith: they have been indirectly alluded to in speaking of the several forms of unbelief. They are found in man's nature, as known through consciousness and observation, and the teachings and appeals of

Revelation,—its susceptibility of holy impression, its power to break from the bondage of lust and habit, to bend circumstances to its will, and advance in all moral excellence. They are found in God's perfections, as revealed by Christ, his infinite love for his human children, his desire for their welfare and improvement, his promised aid in every time of need, to the asking, opened soul. They are found in Christ's example, shewing us the perfect child of God, tempted, yet sinless; surrounded by obstacles and discouragements, yet working, in cheerful trust, and committing his cause to him who sent him. They are found in the beneficent changes already wrought in the world through the power of Christian truth and principles; in the innumerable instances of heroic virtue, of saintly purity, of unconquerable love, which shine along the track of our religion, through all its ages, in all its lands. They are found in the inspired predictions of God's servants of the elder dispensation, sanctioned and renewed in Christianity.

Faith, moral faith, the faith that works by love, and purifies the heart, and removes mountains, and overcomes the world—the faith nourished and sustained by meditation and prayer and holy effort—we need it, the world needs it. Amid circumstances of encouragement belonging to the present, there is much also to dishearten. The world abounds in strifes and dissentions; there is an upheaving of old foundations, in Church and State; a loosening of the bands which have held society together. Dark omens come upon the horizon, and shroud the light of many a starry hope. There is need of a faith which takes hold of Heaven's promises; which looks above the passing cloud, above the din and conflict of the present; which asks not for success as the condition of its life, but does and endures, if so ordained, *without* success; a faith which through indifference, and opposition, and apparent failure, toils on, with cheerful patience, at the allotted post, in the offered opportunities, and having done all, waits upon God for the promised blessing, in his own good time to come.

And let the christian pulpit, especially, strive for this faith, as the source of its power, as its hope, its life. Oh, let it not despair of its humble ministrations! It has that to work with

which can move the world! Truth; God's Heaven-sent word; the "lifted up" Redeemer. Let it put faith in these, and be true to these, and it shall have the blessing.

> "Though no one seem to hear, yet every word
> That thou hast linked unto an earnest thought,
> Hath fiery wings, and shall be clearly heard
> When thy frail lips to silent dust are brought."

And let our young brother, who is henceforward to stand at this altar as the preacher of Christ's truth,—let him stand here in faith; let him labor in faith; let him feel that whoso, with holy heart, works for holy ends, works with the might of the Infinite. Let him not speak in his own name, but in the name of Jesus of Nazareth; let him not speak his own words, but the words which God has given him, and shall give to his continued asking, and he will not—cannot—speak in vain.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

BY REV. HIRAM WITHINGTON, OF LEOMINSTER.

My Brother—It is no new title, that with which I now address you. It is in no official sense merely, as you know very well; our brotherhood began long ago; it has grown strong and near in the sympathy of earnest purposes, and inspiring thoughts. We have shared together the labors and pleasures, the struggles, hopes and fears of that half unreal and dream-like period of life, from which you are now passing to the more positive relations and labors of the actual world; the wide waste of ocean stretching between, has been to us a bond of union; we have gone forth together with communing hearts in the clear, bright morning of our early hopes; we have stood side by side in darker hours, when night overshadowed the sky—night, that is not starless, while other hearts are helping ours to bear, and the serene light of the Father's love is shining from the heavens above us.

Accept first, my word of fraternal congratulation, and not mine alone. In the name of the Christian Ministry, your brethren in a common humanity, a common labor, and a common hope; and especially in the name of those who know you, and who feel for you a peculiar and a personal interest, I bid you welcome to the work on which you now enter. Our hearts are with you, and our prayers are for you. God bless you, my brother.

It is not to a position of ease, of power, or of profit, in any worldly sense of these terms, that we welcome you. We know well,

even those of us who as yet count our experience in the work by months and not by years—we know well that if your office have any reality, it will of necessity be one of toil, of struggle, of anxiety; of contact and conflict with the sternest realities, without and within. We congratulate you that it is so; that you gird on in this hour of strangely mingled hope and fear, the armor of a Christian soldier; that you go forth prepared to work faithfully, and to "endure hardness" with a brave and an earnest spirit. We rejoice for you, knowing that it is a good thing to labor and to struggle, aye, and if need be, "to suffer and be strong."

We are glad too, that into this great field of the world, "white to the harvest," there goeth forth to-day another laborer; that we have set you here to-day, another light to shed abroad the radiance of Christian truth, a watchman and a messenger, with the commission of Jesus,—"to publish the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Nor is it in any narrow or professional spirit, that I thus speak of your office. I hold you not one whit more truly a Christian minister because you have been called to this position, and consecrated to the work by sacerdotal forms. Every true disciple of Jesus is a minister and an apostle of his gospel, his commission the witness in his heart; his annointing not in the laying on of priestly hands, but the influence of that sanctifying spirit that cometh like the viewless wind.

Yet I would not seem to overlook the peculiar sacredness and the high significance of your professional work. I congratulate you that you are left at liberty to "give yourself wholly to these things;" to bestow upon them all your time, and thought and energies; to make it your life work and that only, to be a Christian minister. I congratulate you on having a fixed position, where are given the means to work, and the materials to work upon; upon having a place and a privilege of utterance; upon being brought into personal relations and direct contact with living souls and warm hearts; on being a minister to this people,

and all the opportunities your office confers; to sympathise with and comfort the afflicted, to help and guide the doubtful, to encourage the timid, to counsel the weak, to strengthen and to save the tempted—unspeakably the dearest privilege that mortal heart can know.

And we receive you to-day, into no narrow fraternity. I had declined this office, had I supposed myself to speak in the name of a sect or a party. I welcome you to no priestly clanship—no fellowship based on a human creed, or the dogmas of the past. I welcome you to liberty, the widest and the fullest,—liberty of opinion—liberty of speech. I welcome you in the name, and for the sake of every Christian minister who loves his Master, and who has a heart to recognise the spirit of his Master wherever he finds it. I welcome you to the great brotherhood of earnest and holy men, all the world over. I welcome you to the company of the faithful, whose sacred names the past has reverently chronicled—of all saints and prophets and martyrs—of Channing and Follen and Ware—of Fenelon, Oberlin, and Taylor—of Peter, Paul, and John—and that great multitude that have borne witness for Jesus; and among whom he stands, the life-giving centre, the bond of union, the source of light—as round a central sun revolve the faithful stars.

In my own name, in the name of this Council, in the name of all Christian hearts, I give you this Right Hand of Fellowship. God bless you in all the relations and duties of life. God bless you with the hearty confidence, and the warm affections of this people. God bless you as a preacher of Christian truth. May he be the wisdom of your speech, the light of your mind, and the peace of your heart. May he wing the word of your lips with power, that it may be a comforting, a life-giving, and a sanctifying word.

God bless and prosper you, my brother.

ADDRESS,

BY REV. JOHN T. SARGENT, OF SOMERVILLE.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS AND BRETHREN OF THIS RELIGIOUS SOCIETY,—

By the usual services of Ordination, the connection is now sealed between you and your pastor. You have listened with no little interest, to the excellent words of wisdom and of warning he has received, and you are hoping, for your own sakes as well as his, that he will profit by the useful lessons of this day. When the prayer went up to God just now, for a blessing on this young man's labors among you, and when the hands of his elders in the ministry were laid upon his head, your own hearts were doubtless filled with emotions corresponding to those fervent intercessions. When the charge came so impressively from the full soul of a well tried and faithful experience, you were wishing, I am sure, that yours might be the privilege to reap the fruits of a ministerial fidelity so portrayed; and when again, the hand of his friend in fellowship was so warmly grasping that of your minister, it seemed as if yours could all go forward in the same generous pledge of welcome and of sympathy. Your souls as well as his are touched by the services and asociations of this occasion, and it may well be supposed that none more anxiously than you, can wish to see fulfilled the spiritual purposes of that connexion, which is this day solemnized. The pastor of your choice may well feel a trembling solicitude, lest he fail to meet your expectations and the full measure of this ministry's duties, as they have been set forth, and, while he enters on his work with the best desires to serve you, according to his ability, it is clear that

his purpose of serving you can prosper only, under God, according to the readiness with which you meet and reciprocate his intentions. It is in your power, now, to baffle completely all the earnest yearnings of his soul in your behalf, or to make them rise into heavenly and efficient fervors. It is yours to trample down, by your apathy, these incipient fires of his hope and zeal for you, or to make them tower up into hallowed and enlivening flames that shall kindle all around your Zion, and illuminate as with a holy light, your temple and your homes. Yours to grieve and wound his waiting spirit, till it bends down in the dust with a sickening disappointment, or to give it force to "mount up with wings as an eagle," as it circles among you, an angel of everlasting good. Yours to crown his efforts here with the glad reward which he seeks in your improvement, or to kill and crush them by the blunting force of your indifference. He has offered himself, as you have seen, this day, a willing sacrifice on the altar of your central and spiritual sympathies. It is for you to say how far you receive or will appreciate the offering, and how cordially you will meet his advance toward the inner temple of your souls. We have seen that *he* has received some weighty admonitions as to *his* duty, and we can see no reason why *you* should not receive, at least, some friendly and respectful suggestions in regard to *yours*,—for surely you *have* duties in this relation, or else, of course, *he* could have none. You have obligations and responsibilities answering to his; the duties which press upon him are but the counterparts of those which press upon you; your service and action must present the counterpoise of that which he renders. The very fact that you have called him here, and that you think a ministry among you is needed at all, presupposes, at least, some corresponding *passive* obligations on your part. It presupposes that you mean to put yourselves in the way to *receive* his instructions, at any rate, however little you may act directly in conformity with them. But a *passive* condition on your part, my friends, in reference to your minister, is not enough; surely not. You must *work* with him; his preaching must have the answer of your practice; his words must find resonant echoes within the chambers of your soul; his parochial services must

receive your welcome assent and hearty sympathy, and all his operations among you, must have the balance weight of your co-operation. If it be not so, and, if the scale which weighs alike your obligations and his, be not so poised by your joint and harmonious efforts, then his office among you, so far, is destined to be a sinecure and a crippled affair. His ministry will drag; it will be (though not through *his* fault, yet none the less really because it is *yours*) a half way and one sided business, and you must answer to God for the sin of having thus neutralized your minister's efforts. But why need I argue or seek to illustrate a truth or proposition so self evident as this,—that the duties of pastor and people are mutual and reciprocal,—answering ever the one to the other, like the fruit and the flower to the sunlight and the dews. Surely, now, if it be the duty of your pastor to be, at the appointed times, within this pulpit, it is yours no less to be, at the same time, within these pews, else would he be only "as one that beateth the air," or "striketh with his fist against a stone wall," and your inviting him to come here would be (to speak plainly in Saxon English) a mere hoax! If it be his duty to *preach*, it is yours no less to *hear*, and to "take heed *how* ye hear," and still more to endeavor to *practice* on what you hear. If it is his duty to administer the sacred ordinances of religion, it is yours, no less, to attend on those ordinances with constancy and seriousness whenever administered. If it is his duty to visit you in your homes, it is yours to receive those visits in a cordial and friendly manner, seeking ever to make them instrumental to your spiritual progress and your growth in holiness. Your pastor will come to you; he will desire to come, I know, not with the stiff and sanctimonious formality of a hireling priest robed in authority, but with the frankness and sincerity of an honest friend, as a brother among his brethren, as a man among men, feeling the need of your sympathy as you do of his. Receive him, then, with equal frankness as he comes; with a cordiality and grateful affection, growing out of the fact, and of your conviction of the fact, that he comes to you with no other motive than your good and for the promotion of your spiritual happiness and well being, as God may give him power. Remem-

ber, too, that next to the ever-living and quickening oracles of God in the gospels, it is from your firesides he must bring the influence and the motive that is to kindle his sacrifice at this altar. Nothing can so happily prepare him for the service of the sanctuary, and make him eloquent there, as the revelation to him of your soul's inner depths and feelings,—the knowledge he shall bring of your spiritual and actual condition, as he gathers it from an unreserved communion with you at your homes. There is no source, either of happiness or prosperity so true, both to pastor and people, as this unreservedness of their intercourse; let your communications, therefore, with your pastor on religious subjects, and especially on the subjects of your doubts and difficulties, be unconstrained, cordial, and free; feel it to be your duty to *commence* religious conversation with your pastor on these subjects, when he visits you, and so open the way for the full effect of that ministry whose influence you expect to reap.

Why can we not be as unreserved in our communications as to what troubles or has sickened our *spirits*, as we are in regard to our *bodily* ills and ailments, when the doctor comes to see us? And yet, how striking is the contrast of our conduct and our inconsistency in these particulars. In a fit of the spleen, amid the pains of his body, the poor nervous hypochondriac or dyspeptic will be voluble enough, and go on for hours with the voluntary detail of his symptoms to the physician, telling with a great deal of pathos of an oppression here, and an ache there, and a little twinge somewhere else, till at last the medical attendant finds, amid the anxious volubility of his patient, he has really found scarcely any time to say a single word himself, or to offer his prescriptions. He is left in no doubt at all, about the symptoms of *his* patient. And yet, in our psychological troubles and ailments, the sufferings of a mind or spirit diseased, we go to the other extreme, and say little or nothing about them to our spiritual physician or adviser. He may sit for hours with us seeking to know our inward feelings and experience, but we say nothing, and then he goes away in perplexity, and perhaps the next Sunday in his description of the case we find he is all

wide of the mark, and all because of our want of a communicative disposition.

Now, I ask my friends, how shall your minister prescribe for you with effect unless he know the precise posture of your spirits in regard to spiritual things or interests, and how can he know these unless in his visits to you he finds you "willing to communicate" in regard to your peculiar trials. And, furthermore, as as in a parish of any extent a minister's visits cannot be very incessant or frequent if he be impartial and faithful to each family in his charge and to his other duties, so it is all the more important when he does come, that you improve the time as we have suggested. And do not expect his visits to be so frequent as to interfere with his other duties. Give him time to prepare for the pulpit. Hasty and crude efforts will scarcely meet the demands of the pulpit at the present day, nor would you be satisfied with any such; and yet you can reasonably expect none other if you require of your pastor the exhaustion of his time in a routine of parochial calls. If by his services on the Sabbath in this place you expect to be moved or influenced; if by the workings of his soul you expect your own to receive an impulse, you must give him sufficient time, or some time, on other days in the week, for retirement and study and the effective development of his soul in your behalf. If (to use an ordination phrase) it is his duty to bring "beaten oil" into this sanctuary, it is yours to give him *time to beat it*, and also to walk in the light of that oil when it is beaten.

Remember that your pastor will have his trials, anxieties, and difficulties, as well as you, and, as you expect him to sympathise with you in your troubles, be sure that you sympathise with him in his. Have somewhat the more consideration for him on account of his youth in the ministry and in view of the fact that he has had but little time as yet to reap the experience which he needs, having come so immediately from the seclusion of a theological school, into the pressing responsibilities of a parish. Give him time to grow parochially, and do not, by the impatience and unreasonableness of your expectations, wear him out prematurely. You might as well and reasonably, look for the vigor

of an ancient oak on the withes of a spring willow, as for young Timothy to manifest all of a sudden, the maturity of St Paul. Be patient then and bide the time for your pastor to be all he aims to be, in your service. Encourage him as you can by your attendance in the sanctuary, and when here be not too captious and hypercritical in your judgement of his services. Let him see that you value his ministrations for their practical point, and that you have confidence enough in his goodness of heart and sincerity of purpose, to stand the fire of his reproof, even when he wounds you by their force. Beware, also, of another mistake, that of supposing that you are really *here*, in the sanctuary, when in fact, you are not, having fallen asleep, it may be, or being engaged in some worldly calculations or abstraction, or letting your thoughts wander from the purposes of the occasion into your counting rooms and places of business, thereby proving, clearly enough, that "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," and, of course, that where your *hearts* are, *there*, to all intents and purposes, and for the time being, *you* are.

Again, for the better and more complete effect of his ministry, we charge you, as you value your peace and his, to maintain, ever, the *freedom* of this pulpit; for what a consummate inconsistency it would be in you to look for eloquence and a clear voice in your minister, if, on any subject near his heart, or the heart of the world you seal his lips! What an absurdity to expect him to soar towards heaven, if you clip the wings of his tendency forward and upward! Let me tell you, then, (and yet I do not know that you need particularly the suggestion) that just so far as you bind him, you embarrass and fetter yourselves. He is here to speak his own thought, in his own way, from his own soul, the fruit of his own study into religious truth; you have chosen him for this, and not to ring changes frigidly on certain profitless and obsolete questions of controversy, nor to be the echo of other peoples prejudices.

The great demand of this age is for the plainest possible expositions of Christian faith and duty from the pulpit, the most direct and vigorous vindication of those great moral questions and reforms that are now convulsing and stirring up the very soul of

this age, and woe be to that pulpit which gainsays or resists these demands of the age, or falls back timidly from its requisitions. May it never be the rebuke of this pulpit, as of some others, that with such grave questions of humanity it will have nothing to do, and do nothing, nor the shame of this people, as of some others, that having chosen a man to tell them the truth, they forbid him on his peril, to use the privilege. There are some pulpits, I am sorry to say, on which, as by the finger of God, there is clearly enough written, now, the solemn verdict—"weighed in the ballance and found wanting," "MENE, MENE, TEKEL," which only the true prophets of this day can faithfully interpret. There are pulpits (but I am glad to believe that this is not one of them) which seem to be lined, as it were, inside and all through, and all around, by the most uncomfortable constraints, like the barrel in which it is said the Roman Consul, Regulus, was confined by order of the Carthaginians,—filled with iron spikes, so that whichever way the unhappy occupant turns, he is sure to have thorns in his flesh. In such pulpits, surely, it is a kind of martrydom to stand and serve; so that, now, the true work of a christian people is to draw the spikes clean out of the pulpit, or, at least, to reverse their points, so that in case of an assault upon the freedom or independence of the pulpit on the outside, the assailants may find they are only "kicking against the pricks."

So, also, in the next place, as you will leave your minister free to speak what he honestly believes to be true, himself, you will be no less careful not to constrain him in regard to any other voices or ministers, he may choose to invite into this desk for your edification. If he be a *man*, and not the merest child clad somehow in the office of a Christian teacher, he has a right to claim, and he will claim in this matter of exchanges, a discretionary power; and you, as men, have no right, as I am sure you have no inclination, to deny him the privilege. You are bound, so long as he is your minister, to concede him the right of judgment in this matter, and to believe that he seeks your good in whatever way he provides. Any action of yours, contrary to this would seem to go on the presumption that you know all you need to know on the subject of doctrine, that you are

determined to look no further and hear no more, and that whoever says a word in contradiction possibly of your views must of course be in the wrong,—a position of bigotry which I supposed Unitarians were not prepared to assume. Now, it may not be a matter of much consequence in itself considered, whether your minister exchange with this or that preacher, or how often he does it, or whether he exchange at all, except as a matter of convenience to relieve the burden of his labors, and perhaps it would be well if ministers did not exchange as much as they do; but, conceding the advantage or necessity of *any* exchanges, and admitting his right to make them, I cannot see with what consistency or in what direction within the bounds of Christendom, you can draw the lines.

Besides, I think very serious interests are involved for us in that one question, whether by any act of positive exclusion on the ground of mere belief or supposed heresy, we shall virtually deny the name of Christian to those who claim it, and so uproot and fling away the fundamental principle of Unitarianism, which says no man is responsible to another in matters of faith, neither shall any man judge another. It is not for us surely to be guilty of any such inconsistency. Any infringement of that principle, the concession of faith and fellowship to those who claim it, must be fraught with infinite mischief in the church, and only aggravate by the re-action, the very heresy which it aims to oppose, as I think, by this time, our denomination must have learnt.

There is one thing which we of this day and of this denomination have got to learn, if we have not learned it already, and that is, that it will not do for us to run a tilt against certain popular heresies, or to try and dragoon public sentiment into a course or compliance the very opposite of that which it is now taking on the fundamentals of religious inquiry. The current which now sets so strongly against the more rigid forms of conservative action in the church, will not and cannot be stayed It will bear down steadily but surely against every obstacle to truth and free inquiry and surmount all the barriers which the church or priesthood may raise against it, just as certain as the rapids of Niagara would dash over and demolish any earth mounds that

might be built upon the edge of the cataract. Common sense now has gone to work in the exegesis of religious doctrine and duty among all denominations, and vain were the efforts that would put it back from its great and legitimate purpose. The sympathies of the masses (and they, after all, are the ones that have the nearest and most real "hunger and thirst after *justice*") the sympathies of the masses are now going in a direction the very opposite of that which is indicated by crusty and exclusive religionists. The great doctrine of *goodness*,—let the dogmatist and the sectary say what they will, and denounce it as they may, the doctrine of *goodness*, *uncompromising* goodness, heresy though it be, is the one which is going now to form the main tide of popular sentiment. Against the force of this reform flood, the sectarian fanatic may raise what barriers he pleases; he may pile up whole bodies of divinity, mountain high, till they are lost in the clouds, as indeed they often are, and still I believe that same heresy would run up, by the grace of God, in a swelling stream on the other side of that barrier, and on the outside of those books, till it reaches and enters heaven itself long before the bigot has begun to climb his bending and brittle ladder.

Friends, I will apply my remarks in this connexion to your case only by expressing my belief and hope that *you* mean to go in for *goodness* here, with all your heart and souls;—*Christian goodness*, the greatest practical heresy of the day; and that for this, in connexion with your pastor, you will labor in all the relations of this parish.

But I cannot close this address without saying to *the young men* of this society, that I think much of its prosperity depends, under God, upon them. As it was the office and privilege of young men among the Levites to bear up the tabernacle of the Lord in olden times, so it is yours, brethren, to bring to the interests of this Christian temple your willing sympathies and your helping hands. Your pastor is now with you in all the panoply of his faith and hope. Ready to fight the good fight of faith in your behalf, he looks to you to go with him in that contest. Invested as with the armor of God, he repeats for you here the call of Christ, "the captain of your salvation." I feel

assured that when you hear that call you will rally to the very front of this altar "as an army with banners" to encourage and sustain him in his arduous labors. Looking anxiously, as he now does, for the counsel of his elders in this flock, and for that wisdom which comes by "a multitude of years," he is no less hopeful in his confidence of your assistance. Amid the pressure of his responsibilities he looks to *you* for a *working* sympathy in all that concerns the interests of his ministry, and of the church, and of the Sabbath school in this place.

He has received "the right hand of fellowship" from these assembled churches;—let him now feel that he will receive, no less heartily, the right hand of *your* fellowship in all the various departments of his ministry and service. You are admonished to this duty all the more seriously, my brethren, by the fact that within a few months some of the more aged and influential members of your church, those who had stood here as among its pillars, have fallen by the weight of years and gone by the way of death, through the gate of shadows, and by the message of the Almighty which has called them to their rest. "Your fathers! where are they?" I look around here and they of the hoary heads whom I used to see with you in the late summer days, bending reverently in this sanctuary, are no longer with you. They are gathered, fitly enough, within the last harvest months, like "shocks of corn," into the garner of that heavenly inheritance they have won. That memorable patriarch* of your society who had numbered so many years, and who stood so nearly on the edge of a century, the revered veteran who leaned upon his staff so near this altar, and so constantly, even after his hearing had failed,—the aged sire who stood so like the moss-grown monument of the past,—that wondrous old admonition of your duty in the sanctuary, has gone. His ear was not so keen as yours, young men, to take in the word of God from his spoken or written oracles in this place; but you are happy indeed, if you bring to this place of prayer as keen a faith, as willing a spirit of obedience and trust, or as constant a reverence for the

*Deacon Gideon Foster, who died Nov. 1st, 1845, aged 96 years.

sanctuary and its objects as he did. That familiar form, so bent with age, had seen the day when it stood erect enough in defence of our liberties; and that old hand of his, now mingling with the dust of this land for whose freedom he contended, took fast and faithful hold of the horns of this altar even to his latter days. Yes!—It may not be forgotten either by you or by any of us, that "the sword of the spirit" was firm in the grasp of that old man even to the last, and long after he had laid aside "the sword of Gideon" which he bore once to yonder heights, in the fear of God and in behalf of human rights. But he has gone;—and others have gone from among you, and others still are destined to go, and God alone knoweth how soon. So it must be in the force of that destiny which carries us away "as with a flood." The worshippers in this temple must sooner or later all decease from their places and go the way whence they shall not return; the temple itself must crumble and dilapidate, till, at last, "not one stone shall be left upon another;" the fires of this altar shall be quenched as the altar itself yields to the crushing influence of time upon all material things; this pulpit shall lose its coherence and its voice, and be shrouded in a final silence as it falls,—but the spiritual influences with which all these things are connected, the hallowed affections which may have grown up from time to time between you and your several pastors, the impressions made upon you by their successive ministrations, the issues of the solemn service you have this day witnessed, and the effects of the ministry now begun shall never die, but shall leave their almost infinite impress upon your souls, and be unfolded more fully at last, for your weal or woe, in that day "when the books are opened" and "the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed."